

## U.S. Hotel Discounts for Frequent Guests

**Q: Hi, Peter. My wife and I are recently retired and are planning to take some trips by car to see the country. Are there hotel chains or groups that offer special packages if we use that chain or group to stay overnight as we travel across the country, or are senior-citizen discounts our only option?**

A: My suggestion would be to sign up for one or more hotel-loyalty programs, which are the equivalent of airline frequent-flier programs. As with airlines, hotel-loyalty programs reward you for staying with one chain regularly by offering points or credits that you can use for free nights, gift cards, plane tickets, dining out, movie tickets, and more. Points are generally accrued at the rate of five to 20 per dollar spent.

I recommend companies such as Wyndham or Hilton, which each have a huge geographical reach and encompass numerous brands. By signing up as their frequent guest, you can stay in an affiliated hotel every night and maximize your point-earning potential. Wyndham's program, for example, lets you stay for free with as few as 7,500 points (usually with no blackout dates). Its program includes not only Wyndham Hotels and Resorts but also Microtel Inns & Suites, Ramada, Hawthorn Suites, Days Inn, Howard Johnson, Super 8, Travelodge, Knights Inn, and Baymont Inns & Suites.

Hilton's HHonors rewards program has locations all over the United States and Canada, and its brands include Conrad, Doubletree, Embassy Suites, Hampton Inn, Hilton Garden Inn, Homewood Suites, and Waldorf Astoria.

Many bed-and-breakfasts also participate in frequent-stay programs. But remember that since bed-and-breakfasts are independently owned and operated, staying in one doesn't necessarily earn you points that let you stay in another—unless the inn belongs to a local association or chamber of commerce that runs a member-based loyalty-program. In this regard, the Wine Country Inns of Sonoma County offer a \$25 discount on your third stay with a participating bed-and-breakfast.

Sometimes entire states have bed-and-breakfast loyalty programs. Until recently, Missouri was offering a \$100 gift certificate to visitors who had every space on a frequent-stay card stamped.

If none of this appeals, you can always ask if the hotel offers discounts to older travelers or to auto-club members.